TROBAIRITZ

Medieval Chick band

medieval composers with feminist agendas

songs about life, love and women in the thirteenth century

trobairitz in concert

8 pm saturday february 22 1997

convocation hall, university of alberta campus

THANK YOU to: Zoryana Clothing, Mike Perrino of Whyte Knight, The U of A Department of Music, Vic Houle, Bill Damur, Peter MacPherson, Chris Helman, Chris Brown, Mark Wallace, Michael Pierce, Darryl Dewalt, Gary Grønnestad, and our Moms.

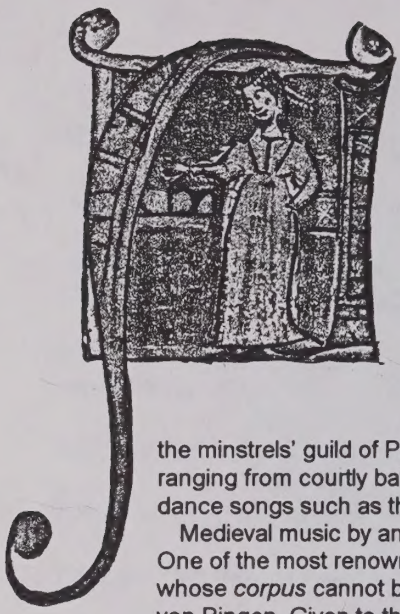
Please join us in the Arts Lounge for refreshments after the concert!

Programme

Ave generosa	Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179)
O viridissima virga	Hildegard von Bingen
Quen quer que	*from* Cantigas de Santa Maria de Alfonso X el Sabio (1221-1284)
Chanterai por mon coraige	*attr.* Guiot de Dijon (*fl.* 1189) *or* Dame de Fayel
Conductus V	*from* Codex de las Huelgas (13th century)
O Virgo splendens	*from* Llibre Vermell (14th century)
Stella splendens	*from* Llibre Vermell (14th century)

Intermission

La Quinte Estampie Real	Anonymous (13th century)
Danse royale (Ductia)	Anonymous (13th century)
Bele Doette	Anonymous (13th century)
Je vous pri	Dame Margot & Dame Maroie
Li grant desirs	*from* Montpellier Codex (13th century)
Je sui joliete	*from* Montpellier Codex (13th century)
Salterello	Anonymous (14th century)
Canone	Matteo da Perugia (15th century)
A chantar	Comtessa de Dia (*fl.* 1212)
L'autrier joer m'en alai	*from* Montpellier Codex (13th century)
Quant je parti	*from* Montpellier Codex (13th century)
C'est la fins / Prendes i garde	Guillaume d'Amiens (13th century)



Notes

In Medieval musical spheres, women participated alongside men as composers, performers and patrons. Music was included in the education of an aristocratic lady, and powerful political figures like Eleanor of Acquitaine and her granddaughter Blanche of Castile were both patrons of and participants in the arts. Women of lower classes could make a living as a *chanteresse* or a traveling *jougleresse*. City tax records and household accounts record payments made to female musicians, while the names of eight women appear among the thirty-seven members of the minstrels' guild of Paris in 1321. These *minstrelles* performed works ranging from courtly ballads and *lais* to instrumental ***estampies*** and dance songs such as the stately ***canone*** or a lively ***salterello***.

Medieval music by and for women also thrived in religious institutions. One of the most renowned composers of the Middle Ages, and one whose *corpus* cannot be equaled in volume or originality, is Hildegard von Bingen. Given to the church by her parents at a very young age, Hildegard became the Abbess of a convent at Rupertsburg, where she was highly respected for her mystic visions, her theological, scientific and medical treatises and her immense musical output. Written for her own nuns to sing, it is perhaps not surprising that many of Hildegard's songs are dedicated to women, most notably, the Virgin Mary and Saint Ursula. But the extreme range and subtlety of her melodic lines coupled with the poetic sensuality of her texts creates an unusual, ecstatic and sublime atmosphere in this monophonic music.

In a convent in northern Spain, music was being composed for the nuns of Las Huelgas who sang both monophonic chant and polyphony. The Abbey at Las Huelgas was a wealthy and important religious centre whose Abbess held considerable authority. The conductus ***Casta Catholica*** from the Codex Las Huelgas, is a polyphonic piece with two texts, which are subject to considerable melismatic treatment, including an interesting hocket figure. The text refers to Doña María Gonzáles, Abbess in Las Huelgas from 1286 till 1313, and the song is believed to have been performed at weddings of the nuns to Christ.

Las Huelgas was a major stopping place on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostella. Many pilgrim songs survive from the Middle Ages, in part due to the interest of King Alfonso X, *El Sabio*, who gathered and edited the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, a vast collection of Marian songs and miracle-stories. A typical *cantiga de miragre*, ***Quen quer que***, tells the story of a Moorish woman of Borja whose dead son was miraculously resuscitated by the Virgin Mary. Songs about the great pilgrimages, the crusades, often relate the reflections of a woman who waits for her lover or husband to return from foreign lands. The crusade song ***Chanterai por mon coraige***, is attributed in different manuscripts to both the trouvère Guiot de Dijon and the enigmatic Dame de Fayel.

Two Latin, polyphonic pilgrim songs, ***Stella splendens*** and ***O Virgo splendens***, are from the fourteenth-century manuscript *Llibre Vermell*, from Monserrat in Catalonia. *O Virgo splendens* is a Spanish *caça*, a finite canon, here sung in four parts; while *Stella splendens* is a strophic song with a *tornada* or refrain which is sung after each stanza.

In the secular realm, the courtly lady was the idealized counterpart of the Virgin Mary. Poems of *fin' amors* (courtly love), originated by the troubadours of twelfth-century Provence, idolized the lady as a model and mirror of love and chivalry. But Medieval women were not only important topics of troubadour songs; female troubadours, or *trobairitz* as they are called in old Provençal, felt a certain solidarity with their sisters which is expressed in their own compositions. Female composers necessarily transformed the conventions of the male tradition, resulting in a more direct and realistic approach to their poetry. While we have texts for over thirty *trobairitz* songs, only one of them, the Comtessa de Dia's ***A chantar m'er***, survives complete with its original melody.

Medieval women were also active in the trouvère movement of northern France (though there are only a handful of surviving musical examples). This later French tradition saw the standardization of the *formes fixes* — *ballade*, *virelais* and ***rondeaux*** — as well as genres such as the *chanson de toile* (spinning song), *chanson de femme* (woman's song), and *jeu-parti* (debate song), which were often written in a woman's voice. From this era, the popular *chanson de femme*, ***Bele Doette*** communicates some of the personal emotions associated with love and death — common elements of Medieval life — and reveals a typical transformation of a widow's life from wife to nun. ***Je vous pri*** discusses a question of courtly behaviour such as might have been debated at Countess Marie de Champagne's famed court of love.

Anonymous 'women's songs' about courtly love, comprise several of the melodies which are combined in the polyphonic motets found in the **Montpellier codex**. The thirteenth-century motet was built upon a plainchant fragment or popular tune in the *tenor*; to this was added two or three upper voices, the *motetus*, *triplum* and *quadruplum*, each with an independent melody and text, sometimes closely related and other times contrasting even in the secular and sacred nature, or gender perspective of the sentiments being expressed.

In performing these works for you this evening it is our desire that the richness and vitality of the Medieval woman, her life, love and music, might be accessible to our audience. Original manuscript facsimiles as well as modern editions have been consulted and both Medieval and present day performance practices taken into account. But while authenticity has received some consideration, our main ambition is to use the resources we have at hand to make this music live for you. (If you would like to see a future performance on authentic instruments, we will gratefully accept any donations toward our Medieval instrument fund!) Like Dame Maroie we believe that "it is better to dwell in joy through speaking than to languish forever through keeping silent."

Katherine Wallace

Translations

Ave generosa
Hail, noble,
glorious and chaste maid;
you, pupil in the eye of chastity,
you, essence of holiness,
who were pleasing to God.

For this heavenly elixir
was within you,
the heavenly word was
clothed in flesh through you.

You, shining white lily,
on whom God looked
before all creatures.

O most beautiful and sweet;
how greatly God delighted in you!
When he placed the warmth
of his fire in you so that his Son
might be suckled by you.

Thus your womb held joy
when all the heavenly harmony
resounded from you.
Because, virgin,
you bore the Son of God,
whence your chastity shone in God.

Your womb held joy,
like the grass on which dew falls
when it is drenched with freshness;
even as it was done in you,
O mother of all joy.

Now let all Ecclesia glow with the
dawn of joy and resound in harmony,
for the sake of the sweetest virgin
and most praiseworthy Mary
the bearer of God. Amen.

O viridissima virga
O greenest branch, hail,
sprung forth in the airy breezes
of the prayers of the saints.

When the time came
that your branches blossomed;
— hail, hail to you! —
for the warmth of the sun
exuded from you a fragrance
like the odour of balsam.

For in you blossomed the beautiful
flower which gave fragrance to all
the parched perfumes.

And they all appeared anew
in full verdure.

Whence the heavens dropped dew
upon the grass and the whole
earth was made glad,
because her womb
brought forth wheat,
and because the birds of heaven
made their nests in it.

Then a meal was
prepared for humanity,
and great joy for the banqueters;
whence, O sweet Virgin,
no joy is lacking in you.

Eve despised all these things.

Now, however, let there be praise
to the Highest.

Quen Quer Que
Refrain:
Anyone who trusts in the Virgin and pleads with sincerity, then she will do what he asks, even if the person belongs to another faith.

For this reason, Saint Mary of Salas performed a beautiful miracle and had mercy on the woman of Borja, because she had a son whom she had raised, who had died when he was still very strong. The woman was very distressed and in great pain.

Grieving because of the loss of her son, she did not know what to do. But she had seen Christian women who went to Saint Mary of Salas and heard them speaking of the miracles she had performed. She had the courage to trust in the Virgin.

She entrusted her son to the Virign and prepared an offering. But the Moorish women contended with her. She said, "my friends, may God be with me in this bad time. I believe my hope will conquer your stubbornness,

For I will carry my son to Salas with the image of wax that I have bought already and I will keep watch over him in the Church of the fortunate Saint Mary and I am sure that she will have compassion on my distress."

For a full night the woman watched unhappily. But then the Virgin, the merciful queen, resuscitated her son; this happened very quickly, because her great power exceeded all wisdom.

When the woman saw this she marvelled greatly for her son had been dead for three days. It was not long before the woman became a Christian because she saw that her son had been given back to her. She had great reverence for Saint Mary.

Chanterai por mon coraige
I will sing to keep my courage up, since I must comfort my heart, for in my great distress I do not wish to die, or go mad, when I see anybody return from the savage land where he has gone who soothes my heart when I hear him mentioned.
God! When they shout 'Quick march!' O Lord, help the pilgrim for whose sake I tremble, for the Saracens are treacherous.

I shall be waiting in anguish until I see him come back. He has gone off as a pilgrim. In fear and trembling I will wait for him to come back, for in spite of my family I have no intention of marrying any other. He who suggests this is mad.
God! When they shout 'Quick march!' O Lord, help the pilgrim for whose sake I tremble, for the Saracens are treacherous.

What grieves me is that I did not go with him. He sent me the shirt which he wore for me to hold in my arms. At night, when love of him torments me, I take it to bed and hold it to my naked body, to ease my suffering.
God! When they shout 'Quick march!' O Lord, help the pilgrim for whose sake I tremble, for the Saracens are treacherous.

Conductus V
Let them sing
Chaste, catholic weddings
Chaste practices
Most beloved songs.
Flashing elegance
Mixing marvels
Biting hunger
Mourning malice.
Amen.

Sweet lady, grant
Sweets of sweetness
Gifts of godliness
Sweets of divinity.
Powerful might
Providence to the pious
Lead on, most pious lady
Let our homeland be conspicuous.
Amen.

O Virgo splendens
O resplendent Virgin, here on the miraculous mountain cleft everywhere by dazzling wonders, and which all of the faithful climb. Behold with the merciful eye of love those enmeshed in the bonds of sin, that they will not have to endure the blows of hell, but rather will be named among the blessed through your intercession.

Stella splendens
O star, shining like a ray of the sun on the mountain miraculously cleft, hear your people.
All of the people come rejoicing, rich and poor, great and small.
They climb the mountain so that their eyes might see, and return thence filled with grace.

Bele Doette
Fair Doette sits at the window; she reads a book, but her heart is not in it: she thinks continually of her lover, Doön, who has gone tourneying in other lands.
Ah woe is me!

A squire has dismounted at the hall steps and undone his saddlebag. Fair Doette runs down the steps; she does not expect to hear bad news.
Ah woe is me!

Fair Doette began to question him:
"Where is my lord whom I love so much?"
"In God's name, lady, I will keep it from you no longer: my lord is dead, he was killed at the joust."
Ah woe is me!

Fair Doette began to lament. "Alas for you, Count Do, noble and true! For your sake I shall found an abbey, such that when the appointed feast day arrives, if anyone comes who has loved falsely he will never be able to enter the church."
Ah woe is me!

Fair Doette began to build her abbey, which is very great and will be greater still; she will hope to bring there all the men and women who for love's sake suffer grief and sorrow.
Ah woe is me!
For your sake I will become a nun in the church of St. Paul.

Je vous pri
I beg you, Lady Maroie, to respond to me. A lady, simple and sweet, is loved well and faithfully, and she too loves well. This you should surely know. But if the one who loves her is such that he dare not speak his prayer, and if he cannot bring himself to let her know of it, now tell me what you think: should she reveal herself, or should she remain silent?

Lady Margot, it would be best to judge fairly without excess. Since Love has so taken control of them that they love each other well with steadfast hearts, I say if h does not have the boldness of heart to say that he loves her, she should not be proud; rather she should obey her heart and open her mouth to reveal her love. Since he does not have the strength, sh must show hers, if she wishes to enjoy love.

Lady Maroie, let those be imprudent wh wish to, but I do not allow that foolish people can have any joy in Love, neithe man nor lady, who follow no rules. Do n therefore maintain that a lady may ask her lover, for if she is accustomed to doing so, she abases herself so much that she must be hated for it. She must protect herself by other means. By her artfulness she must ensure that she see him often, speak to him and sit by him, but she must limit herself to this.

You don't know a thing about love, Lady Margot, I can hear that. The foolish woman is one who for money bestows her favours, for there is no love in such a one. But when two hearts are smitten with a love which is not deceitful, it is a very proper thing to speak of your pleasure willingly to your lover, in order not to fall into despair. It is better to dwel in joy through speaking than to languish forever through keeping silent, and then to die.

Li grant desirs
Triplum
The pleasure of my desire and the delig of my agreeable hope often make me fe such great joy that I consider it to be the great gift which lovers have loved and enjoyed. And when I see myself actually failing to win this great good, I have at least this fine remnant. Because it pleases a gracious young man, I am ver willing to be satisfied with this bit.

Motetus
Such great desire I have to make up for the time I lost before I began to love— it not surprising that my true heart is move to song, for in this way can you recogniz

a joyful heart. And if Love wants to ask more of me, tell me what, for it was he who gave me my start.

Tenor: I do not want a husband.

Je sui joliete
Quadruplum
Gaily, with the sweet desire which has captured me completely, I love the sweetest little blonde of great worth as the one who occupies my thoughts. O God, I will sing about it sweetly for love of her. Hugging and kissing have been costly for me and will cost me more. But there never will be any baseness in it ... nostra sunt sollempnia ... for there is such wonderful joy in it. It's a very sweet life, whatever anyone may say— kissing and hugging and laughing and playing with one's sweetheart. He should consider himself fortunate who can get it without resistance. But let an unwilling love be shortlived; fie on love in which tenderness and sweetness are not found.

Triplum
When I see the little flowers burgeon in the meadow and I hear the lark gambol and flitter about in the morning, I take great pleasure in it. And I will sing a little song about it: Gay, loving feelings have wounded me, in the name of God! My heart gasps with joy for I have found dear love to my liking. Gaily, gracefully, adroitly, it has stolen my heart away and sweetly infused it with love. This convent imprisons me for naught; my life is being consumed by grievous torment: I shall not live long at all.

Motetus
I am so gay, so sweet, so pleasing, such a young little maid, of not yet fifteen years. My little breasts are budding as they should. I should be learning about love and amorous ways, but I am in prison. May God curse the one who put me there! It was evil, villainy, and sin to put this little maid in a convent; it was indeed, by my faith; in the convent I live in great chagrin, God, for I am such a young thing. I feel the first sweet pangs beneath my little belt: cursed be the one who made me a nun!

Tenor: Aptatur

A chantar
I must sing of what I'd rather not, I'm so angry about him whose friend I am, for I love him more than anything; mercy and courtliness don't help me with him, nor does my beauty, my rank, or my mind; for I am every bit as betrayed and wronged as I'd deserve if I were ugly.

It comforts me that I have done no wrong to you, my friend, through any action; indeed, I love you more than Sequis loved Valenssa; it pleases me to outdo you in loving, friend, for you are most valiant; you offer prideful words and looks to me but are gracious to every other person.

It amazes me how prideful your heart is toward me, friend, for which I'm right to grieve; it isn't fair that another love take you away because of any word or welcome I might give you. Remember how it was at the beginning of our love? May the Lord God not allow our parting to be any fault of mine.

My rank and lineage should be of help to me, and my beauty and, still more, my true heart. This song, let it be my messenger; therefore, I send it to you, out in your estate, and I would like to know, my fine, fair friend, why you are so fierce and cruel to me. I can't tell if it's from pride or malice.

I especially want you, messenger, to tell him that too much pride brings harm to many persons.

L'autrier joer m'en alai
Quadruplum
The one to whom I submit is, in my opinion, more beautiful than a flower. As long as I am alive, in truth, no one will have the joy and pleasure of my love

except for this flower which grows in Paradise: she is the mother of our Lord who wants forever to possess you, friend, and the two of us together.

Triplum
When the return of leaf and flower signal the arrival of the summer season, God, that is when I think of love who has ever been courteous and gentle with me. Her solace pleases me greatly for her good will relieves my pain. Many honours and good things come to me from being in her service.

Motetus
The other day I went out on the by ways. I entered an orchard to pick some flowers and found there an agreeable lady of fair mien. She had a gay heart and sang with great emotion: "I have love! What will I do with it? It's the truth, the truth, whatever anyone says, I will love."

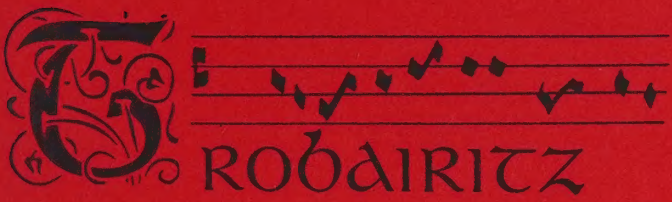
Tenor: Flos [filius eius]

Quand je parti
Motetus
When I left my sweetheart, I told her I would forever live my life in distress. But my beloved reminds me of the pleasure and the gaiety and of her kind courtesy in the face of all the pain which I bear. But it grieved me greatly when the time came to leave, and I said: "Farewell, my sweet!" I saw her cry, and it killed me.

Tenor: Tuo

Two Rondeaux:
C'est la fins / Prendes i garde
It's the truth, whatever anyone says, I will love.
It's down there in the middle of the meadow.
It's true, I want to be in love.
Down there a dance has begun; I have a beautiful sweetheart. *It's the truth, whatever anyone says, I will love.*

Take care, lest someone sees me! If someone sees me, tell me.
It's right down there in that wood —
Take care, lest someone sees me! —
The shepherdess was looking after her cows there; Sweet brown-haired one, I offer myself to you.
Take care, lest someone sees me! If someone sees me, tell me.



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